



## HOW THE EU HELPS ISLANDS

Europe's island communities face a series of challenges, including limited access to resources and services, environmental threats, and ageing populations. With EU support, these can be transformed into opportunities to create jobs, boost local economies and improve lives. The EU-funded INNONETS project is one such example.

## Fostering cross-border agri-food innovation in Greece and Italy

An EU-funded project is promoting cooperation between agri-food sectors in the Ionian Islands of Greece and southern Italy's Puglia region. The aim is to stimulate and support open innovation and networking, helping small businesses to succeed and strengthening local economies.

The Ionian Islands in Greece and Italy's Puglia region, while separated by sea, have much to gain from teaming up to make their respective agri-food small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) more innovative and competitive.

The Ionian Islands consist of 7 islands in the Ionian Sea – one being the popular tourist destination of Corfu – that are home to some 205 400 people. SMEs are the backbone of the regional economy, with these businesses catering mostly to local needs.

Puglia, also known as the heel of Italy's boot, has a population of about 4 million. An export leader in wheat, olive oil and tomatoes, agriculture is much more important in economic terms in this region than elsewhere in the country.

The aim of the EU-funded **Innovative networks for the agri-food sector (INNONETS)** project is to provide innovation support services to agri-food SMEs in both regions. With unemployment and growth shared cross-border concerns, the goal is to help promote creative entrepreneurship as a means of boosting competitiveness across economic and social sectors.



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## Innovation initiatives

INNONENTS emphasises open innovation through smart specialisation, a bottom-up approach that brings together local authorities, academia, businesses and civil society in a bid to boost growth and generate jobs. The idea is to identify, invest in and build upon regional strengths and assets.

In this context, a core project component concerns three cross-border 'living labs' focused on connecting research organisations, companies, local government representatives and citizens. Targeting sustainability, zero waste and developing innovative agri-food SMEs, their aim is to generate ideas for new products or collaboration that taps into regional potential and could create new business or job opportunities.

Also key is the design and development of a cross-border 'innovation brokering centre' to foster joint implementation of project activities and promote cooperation among stakeholders in both regions.



## INNONENTS

**Project full name:** Innovative networks for the agri-food sector (INNONENTS)

**Sectors:** SME support

**Project website:** <https://bit.ly/2mfdpZZ>

**Total cost:** 899 473

**EU CONTRIBUTION:** EUR 764 552

**Fund:** European Regional Development Fund

**PROGRAMME:** Interreg V-A Greece-Italy Programme 2014-2020

**Project start/end:** 2018 to 2020



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